

Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



Western Fox Snake

Elaphe vulpina vulpina

Common name • Western Fox Snake

Scientific name • *Elaphe vulpina vulpina*

State status • Endangered

Ecology

Western fox snakes occur in northern Missouri, eastern Nebraska, southeastern South Dakota east to northern Michigan and northwestern Indiana. In Missouri, they have been found in cultivated fields, along wooded stream valleys and in natural prairies that adjoin marshes. Western fox snakes are active between late April and October and overwinter in dens under brush piles or mammal burrows. Mating begins in April, and females lay 8-27 eggs under logs or leaf litter in May or June. Young hatch in August or September. Western fox snakes are constrictors, and they prey mainly on rodents.

Reasons for Decline

At one time, it was presumed that western fox snakes occurred throughout Missouri north of the Missouri River. Now, they are known only from several sites within the state. Their decline may be due to a combination of factors, including human persecution, draining of wetlands and destruction of natural prairies for agriculture and urbanization projects.

Specific Recommendations

As do many reptiles, western fox snakes play an important role in the food chain. They are a natural means of controlling populations of rodents that could damage crops and other vegetation.

→ Avoid removing or destroying unique habitat features, such as downed trees, logs and brush piles, that provide habitat for the western fox snake or their prey.

→ Draining or destroying known wetland habitat should be avoided.

→ Disposal of wastes and garbage should be done in designated areas far from wetlands.

→ Avoid altering water levels in wetlands where western fox snakes are present.

General Recommendations

→ Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Wetlands and Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers.

→ Refer also to Amphibian and Reptile Management Guidelines.

Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in wetlands, rivers and streams, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation
Policy Coordination Section
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2901 W. Truman Blvd
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180
Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Regulatory Branch
700 Federal Building
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division
901 North 5th Street
Kansas City, KS 66101
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Field Office
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200
Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone: 573/876-1911

Disclaimer

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